FRONTLINE

Hollywood Dreams

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FRONTLINE #413

Hollywood Dreams

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INTRODUCTION

SCOTT RUDIN
When somebody says I want to tell you about an idea I have for a movie. That might be the one. This guy might have Star Wars.

NARRATOR
Tonight, the money and the moguls behind the movies.

TOUR GUIDE
Lights, camera, action.

NARRATOR
Hollywood, a place filled with glamour, and go-getters.

Assistant to
Mike Fenton: **Speilberg's on one.**

Mike Fenton: **Steven, how are you?**

NARRATOR
An inside look at the deal-makers who run a town filled with illusions.

SCOTT RUDIN
It's a constant role of the dice in every way.

NARRATOR
Tonight on FRONTLINE, "Hollywood Dreams."

JUDY WOODRUFF
Good evening.

Hollywood. The name itself is enough to inspire dreams, a magnetic force that's attracted generation after generation of Americans to a place where--in the movies, at least--dreams can come true.
We know about Hollywood from generations of press agents and promoters. But they haven't told us much about the real Hollywood.

Behind the scenes, there's a side of Hollywood you don't see. To understand the movie business, it's not enough to go on location where movies are made. You have to go to the office buildings, where the deals are made.

That's what Producer-reporter Irv Drasnin discovered as he made some unscheduled stops on a FRONTLINE tour of Hollywood.

This is his report. It is called "Hollywood Dreams."

IRV DRASNIN
A water tower overlooking a cemetary. At first glance this is not the stuff dreams are made of, except in Hollywood. Cecil B. DeMille is buried here, next to the Paramount lot he once ruled, a movie mogul of the highest rank. Legends are buried here: D.W. Griffith, whose Birth of a Nation made him a director who also made history. And actors, like Douglas Fairbanks, whose film heroics won the hearts of thousands and made him a movie star. Moguls, legends, stars--the images never die. It's what Americans and the world expect of Hollywood, what every year millions of tourists come to see.

FANTASY TOUR GUIDE
So, as they say in this town, "All quiet on the set." Shh--lights, camera, action. Roll ' em.

MUSIC: "HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD"

IRV DRASNIN
Movie palaces, images, dreams, that's the stuff Hollywood's made of. No wonder this is called the Fantasy Tour.

MUSIC: "HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD"

IRV DRASNIN
The name itself has taken on mythical importance. Yet to make it in Hollywood, to make it in the movies, persists as part of the American dream--and that's real. Behind the facade of Hollywood are some hard realities of the movie business that aren't found on the Fantasy Tour. The bus doesn't stop here, at International Creative Management (ICM), the world's biggest talent agency. But to understand how movies get made, it's a good place to start.

JEREMY ZIMMER, Agent
What I'm calling you about is Burt Lancaster. What do you think is a realistic date to get Burt to sign his contract?

IRV DRASNIN
Jeremy Zimmer is an agent, wrestling with an agent's problem.

JEREMY ZIMMER (On Phone)
What is that based on?

JEREMY ZIMMER
I'm putting together a movie with Burt Lancaster and Kirk Douglas right now and Burt wants to be first on the ad and Kirk wants to be first on the ad. Who's going to win? I don't know.

JEREMY ZIMMER (On Phone)
Let me ask you this. Let me ask you this. Could we get into a room, Helene Hahn from Disney, Leon Kaplan, you, Fred Spector and whoever Kirk Douglas's lawyer is? If we just got everyone in a room and said we're not walking out of the room until we figure this out and let's just do it. Let's make the concerted effort. I think it's good enough.

IRV DRASNIN
Zimmer is 27 years old. In a glamour industry being young doesn't hurt. Neither does the right ancestry. His grandfather was Dory Schary, once head of productions at MGM. Much has been said about agents, but lately it's been about their growing power in a Hollywood where even they might become studio executives. Moguls in training.

RECEPTIONIST (On Phone)
Bill Block's Office.

IRV DRASNIN
Bill Block is 31. At ICM, these young agents are called wolverines for their persistence and tenacity.

BILL BLOCK, Agent (On Phone)
Yeah, as long as he's non-exclusive, uh, in the movie business.

IRV DRASNIN
There are no qualifications for this job, and no rules for success.

Block studied History at Columbia University.

Irv Drasnin: **How many names do you have on your wheeldexes?**

Bill Block: **Hundreds, hundreds, in the college of Hollywood.**

Irv Drasnin: **That's what that represents. These represent people you do business with. On any given day how many people would you talk to?**

Bill Block: **A hundred and fifty. Average.**

Irv Drasnin: **Are you making a deal every day in here?**

Bill Block: **At least. Often working on, working on several. Uh you know and closing several a week.**

Irv Drasnin: **What advice would you give if I wanted to get a movie made in this town?**

Jeremy Zimmer: **Well, you know, there's a lot of different advice. I could give you real cynical advice like don't bother or you know, start playing tennis with the right people, but I wouldn't really believe it. Because what I really believe is that to get a movie made in this town you've got to have a good sense of material, and you've got to have a good piece of material.**

IRV DRASNIN
This is material--a screen play. These are hundreds of them. Twenty-five thousand treatments and scripts a year are registered with the Writers Guild alone. A major studio may finance only 15 or 20 films a year. Why then do so many movies fail?

JEREMY ZIMMER
Sometimes it's about people's judgement. It <u>is</u> about people's judgement. And you know what, a lot of bad movies get made, but a lot of good ones get made, and that's just fine. There's a lot of real crappy paintings out there we never get to see, but they're out there. And there's a lot of shitty books that never get published, and there's a lot of crap on television. There's no, it's not a perfect medium. You know what, there's eight--ten guys who decide 50 to 75 percent of the movies get made. They're fallible, and they divorce their wives, and drink, and make mistakes and have shitty days, and they make bad decisions sometimes. It's okay.

MUSIC: "HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD"

FANTASY TOUR GUIDE
Okay folks, you've heard about it, you've read about it, and now before your very eyes over here on your right, world famous studio, Paramount Pictures. Yes indeed, the largest still operating in Hollywood today and we're surely proud of it. Yes indeed. Right over here in Paramount Pictures. You know this is the studio where Mae West worked, where Marlene Dietrich worked, where Cary Grant worked, yes indeed.

IRV DRASNIN
Once, the studio's judgement was the only one that counted. The old system of studio control over the movies and who makes them is dead, but the studio's power to get a movie made, released, marketed and distributed, is very much alive. So is the pressure on studio executives.

Scott Rudin, Vice President, 20th Century Fox: I'll start on the telephone at five o'clock in the morning and finish at eleven o'clock at night. Now I'm not, that's not, that's not consuming telephone time, but I'll start at five and finish at eleven. That's a long time to be constantly...

Irv Drasnin: I mean what are, who are you talking to, what are you talking about all the time on the phone?

Scott Rudin: Trying to find those 15 pictures, that's all.

Irv Drasnin That's what it's all about.

Scott Rudin: That is. That's it. I mean, cause that's what it comes down to. You can have the most well-run organization, you can have the most beautiful lot, the most terrific relationships with talent, uh you can have everybody in town wanting to work with you, wanting to bring their pictures here, but if you say, if you say yes when you should have said no or no when you should have said yes, you're out of business.

IRV DRASNIN
At 27, Scott Rudin already is Executive Vice President of Production at 20th Century Fox, in an era in which a movie can make 20 dollars and still lose money.

Scott Rudin: The business has become so out of control that you can't really afford to ignore anything. If you're in one of these jobs you have to assume when somebody tells you an idea or somebody says I want to talk to you about a movie you just, you have, you must assume it's a good idea until you hear it and then you can decide otherwise. But when somebody says I want to tell you about an idea I have for a movie that might be the one. This guy might have Star Wars. And until you know what it is, you'd better listen.

Irv Drasnin: Have you ever passed on movies that you later regretted passing on? That became successful movies?

Scott Rudin: Not yet. But I'm sure I will. I haven't been doing it long enough. Yeah, oh I take it back, one Gremlins. Gremlins came to me as a script because I'd produced a picture written by the guy who wrote wrote Gremlins, and I read it and I thought ehh, okay, not too distinguished. Didn't interest me.

Irv Drasnin: And what happened to Gremlins!

Scott Rudin: It went on to be an enormously successful picture that's about to spawn a sequel. So...

Irv Drasnin: How about agents? How important is the agent? Where do they fit into this?

Scott Rudin: Very key. I think in the last five years or so I think the role of the agent has almost superceded the role of the producer. I think agents now are more responsible for putting movies together than most producers. I find myself spending a lot of time courting the major agents in town.

BILL BLOCK
Who loves you? That's right.

IRV DRASNIN
To get a movie made, somewhere down the line you have to talk to the agent because to make a movie you have to make a deal. And to make a deal you need an agent and a package. The right story, the right director, the right stars.

RECEPTIONIST (On Phone)
Jerry Zimmer's Office.

ZIMMER (On Phone)
There is Disney interest but I don't know if the interest is with Dolly Parton or whether it's with Bette Midler.

IRV DRASNIN
And sometimes stars have to be soothed.

JEREMY ZIMMER (On Phone)
Exactly. Exactly. Well, but Malcolm, Malcolm, Malcolm, Malcolm, Malcolm, you and I shouldn't scream at each other. We can go to them right now and say you guys have to be serious and move on this or we're going to lose it.

IRV DRASNIN
The agent is a power broker doing by negotiation what moguls once did by edict, whether it's a soft sell or hard.

JEREMY ZIMMER (On Phone)
Is there no way we can slam this down their throats? I'll work on Ben, you work on Fred.

IRV DRASNIN
Often the agent must structure the deal, try to spread the risk. The average cost of a major film is 14 million dollars.

BILL BLOCK (On Phone)
He will basically split the development costs as long as they recoup together, share equally in producer's fees and participation etcetera, etcetera. He basically, he'll split development if they want to make a 50-50 back end deal with him.

IRV DRASNIN
Always the agent must have the ability to maneuver, in case a better deal comes along.

JEREMY ZIMMER (On Phone)
But I mean if we can get you out and go do this other project with Spielberg, we'd much rather do that. The question is we'd better make sure we do it on our terms, not on theirs. So its a matter of timing. We've got to position them to say to you go elsewhere. Do you understand what I'm saying.

BILL BLOCK (On Phone)
Alright could you hold it one quick sec, one sec, let me just do something here quickly. Hello...

IRV DRASNIN
And no matter what else he's doing, every chance he gets, the agent must close the deal.

BILL BLOCK (On Phone)
It sold at Warner Bros., it never got out of there. Yep, 175 against 325..175...

Irv Drasnin: What's the real art in Hollywood, making a good movie, or making a good deal?

Jeremy Zimmer: Making a good movie. The guys who make good movies get good deals.

Irv Drasnin: But you can make a deal without having a good movie, is that right?

Bill Block: Yes. Yes. Well, an agent is like a stock broker, we will always get our commission, but we try very hard not to put clients in projects that will only be good deals. At least I do, or not good movies because it's a short term arrangement, and they're cold, it's unsuccessful, and you can't sell them again.

Bill Block (On Phone): Who? What? Yes. Set it up, they'll be in there.

Irv Drasnin: How important is the telephone in Hollywood?

Bill Block: The telephone? It's like a bayonnet in this town. Uh. Very important.

BILL BLOCK (On Phone)
Get him, find him, I don't care how, what...

JEREMY ZIMMER (On Phone)
No one from your studio called to ask me what I read this weekend. I'm serious. So I'm not going to tell you. Mmmm, maybe I would, but maybe I'd tell Disney or Ed who already called. What's going on at the studio. Give me some heat for the meeting tomorrow. I need to do five minutes on Columbia business.

JEREMY ZIMMER
It's all about getting what you want and dealing with people and getting them to like giving you what you want. Uh you know Dale Carnegie, of all the like things that sort of trickled through my brain I remembered Dale Carnegie. I remembered that the smartest way to get what you want is to ask somebody to do you a favor.

JEREMY ZIMMER (On Phone)
I'm only going to ask you to please, please, and I put this on a personal favor basis at this point, instruct your attorney to close the deal with me. I'm not asking for unfair numbers, I promise you.

Irv Drasnin: **What were you doing before you were an agent?**

Jeremy Zimmer: **I ran parking lots. I dropped out of college and I was parking cars during college and then I started managing one lot for the Boston Red Sox, and I figured out a method of how if you turned the cars around in a different way you could increase the capacity of the lots by 33%. They were very impressed with that. They gave me another lot to manage and I was making a lot of money doing that and I dropped out of school and they gave me all their lots to manage.**

BILL BLOCK (On Phone)
I mean I'd love to say to you, let's option and re-write it, but I don't think it would do any good, you know, for you to finance that.

IRV DRASNIN
The agent knows that not every deal is a winner. But he knows what winning is.

BILL BLOCK
To get the movie made. That is the bottom line. That is, really...winning the deal is not good enough. Getting the deal closed is step one and we really try to then bring every pressure, point of view, whatever it takes to bear on the given project to get it made. And if they're not going to make it to get it back so we can try to get somebody else to make it. Winning is getting the movie made. Whether the movie works or not I don't know. But we've done our job to the best of our ability if we get it made.

MUSIC: "HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD"

IRV DRASNIN
They're not making movies the way they used to. The economics, the technology, some say even the audience has changed. What hasn't changed in a time when most big budget films lose money is Hollywood's desperate need for ideas and for people who can turn them into big winners at the box office. One place to look for people and ideas is here: USC, at the country's oldest film school. After all George Lucas went here and he made Star Wars, a fact not lost on this generation of filmmakers.

JOHN MILLER, Director
USC isn't far removed from Hollywood. The system that is USC film school is very similar to Hollywood and I think when you first get to USC people really are thinking about the films they want to make. When they leave USC they're thinking about the deals they want to make and they're really two different things. And I myself find myself, as the student loans become due and everything else, more interested in deals than films temporarily because you don't it's nice to eat once in a while and that kind of stuff.

IRV DRASNIN
John Miller is a 29 year old director whose student film was good enough to get him an agent. But to get anywhere in Hollywood, he knows even that may not be enough.

John Miller: **You have to believe that you have something to bring to this business, to the film business, that's worth bringing and that no sensible person becomes a filmmaker. You have to be a little nuts, and you have to be driven by something other than than logic, because logic doesn't land you in Los Angeles.**

Irv Drasnin: **If you had to in so many words, how would you describe Hollywood?**

John Miller: **There is no Hollywood. Hollywood isn't like Disneyland. It's not a self-contained little place with rules and regulations and clear paths to anywhere. Uh, the film business is diverse, it's filled with personalities and it's a question of, sort of connecting with enough of those personalities that are in the right places to do for you what you need done. Um, it's like a giant cocktail party. You need to keep meeting people as much as you need to be talented.**

IRV DRASNIN
In Hollywood, the meeting has taken on legendary proportions. Whether a cocktail party or a power lunch, it helps to have the right table in the right restaurant at the right time. What gets a movie made is convincing someone in a position to do something about it. Someone like Scott Rudin.

Irv Drasnin: **How does a movie get made?**

Scott Rudin: **Somebody falls in love with it and stands on the end of a mount...you know stands some place screaming into the wind long and loud and somebody else hears. I mean that's the only...that's the avenue, I mean there's really no other way. It's all based on, I mean this is a process of advocacy. I mean it's somebody with a passion for something who fights like hell to see that it gets made.**

IRV DRASNIN
Exactly how it works--by the advocacy or hyperbole--very much depends on which side of the desk you're on. Rudin's or John Miller's.

JOHN MILLER
Hype is a way of life in Hollywood. I mean everything's the greatest. You know this is the greatest glass of water I ever had, people tell you at lunch. This is tremendous water. Give me a whole, give me a whole case of this to bring home. Um. Everything is the greatest or the best or, you know, it just has to be, that's the way, it starts that way.

SCOTT RUDIN
You know it's a constant roll of the dice in every way. You know you roll the dice on a writer, you roll the dice on an idea, you buy a book, you hear an idea, you meet with a director, you think, God maybe he can do this, you know. Even though, somebody can come in and say you've got to make my movie. I promise you I'll deliver, it'll be great. And you've got to look in the guy's eyes and you've got to say okay I'll take a chance on this guy.

JOHN MILLER
And I've found myself in meetings where the concept that's being kicked around is something I think is the dumbest idea I've ever heard and I won't say that any more because I've realized that it's par for the course I'm supposed to say it's great, I love it. You can't be totally honest. You can't, if they ask you for an idea you have, you can't say, well, I think it's pretty good and it would make a good film, and make a little money. They don't want to hear that. That means it's death, that means it's the worst film ever made. You have to say, it's the greatest film I've ever seen. I had this idea in a dream where I saw God and I had this idea. And it's so tremendous that it's a sure fire hit, and then maybe they'll think about it.

Irv Drasnin: **Do you find that creative people sometimes walk into this office with a chip on their shoulder?**

Scott Rudin: **Yeah. But very often it's merited because Hollywood tends to treat people pretty shabbily. You know. It's a tough business, there are so few, there are so few movies made every year that you can go...a good movie producer can go a long time between drinks of water. I mean, it's tough to find good stuff. It's very hard and the competition is fierce. Really fierce.**

Irv Drasnin: **Is it possible to separate fantasy from reality in Hollywood, figure out what's real?**

John Miller: **No. I mean I think it's pos...I think you have to do it or they're going to put a white suit on you with no arms. You have to figure out a way to separate fantasy from reality but there's no guidelines. You do it sort of arbitrarily just to keep yourself sane. Who knows what's real and what isn't real? I mean you may meet some bum on the street who says he's going to make a film with you for 10 million dollars and that may be real, and the guy in the three piece suit on the fifteenth floor who's telling you the same thing could be fantasy. You don't know.**

MUSIC: "HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD"

TELEPHONE SEQUENCE

VOICE #1:
Well, I'm going to have a conversation with Spielberg. Actually I've left word for him and I'm waiting to hear from him. If he doesn't call within the hour I'll call him back.

VOICE #2:
So an hour later Steven called me up and he said I didn't realize you wanted to direct. Do you want to direct an "Amazing Story" for me?

MIKE FENTON, Casting Director
All the agents called and wanted to know what Steven thought of the tests, so I'm going to give them some kind of response.

JEREMY ZIMMER
Which means, until Steven Spielberg discovers her he's not really interested.

JOHN MILLER
And although Steven Spielberg's not a graduate of the film school, he's associated himself with the film school.

MIKE FENTON
Kevin Kostner will kill to do any picture with Steven.

VOICE #3
I designed Raiders for Steven.

MIKE FENTON
I must speak to Steven about Harry.

FANTASY TOUR GUIDE
That's the way it's done here in Hollywood. It's who you know. Right? Now let's fact it, it couldn't hurt to be gorgeous. God knows, it wouldn`t hurt to be talented. But the name of the game is who you know.

IRV DRASNIN
The tour bus doesn't stop here either. And it's a hard place to reach by phone. The numbers's unlisted. But if there's someone in Hollywood worth knowing, it's the casting director. Mike Fenton is one of the biggest in town. This is how he does it.

MIKE FENTON, (On Phone)
Talia. I just wanted to let you know where I think we are with regard to the casting of Robert and I had a brief cvonversation with Frank while he was asleep this evening in London. But I spoke to Jack yesterday, and and this is where I think we are. I think the kid to play Robert is Eric Stoltz. Mmmm. Is that a positive Mmmm, or just an mmmm? Yeah. Did you see Mask? Ah. Oh, good. He's dynamite. He..I think that Frank felt that he might be a little too close to the vest, he might be a little too internal, but what we did in testing him was we got him to open up to loosen up a bit. He is such a good actor. He has magic, and it is inventive. Some of his magic is internal. And there's just no question but that you see it in his eyes, that there is, there is a stillness about Eric. But when he gets energized he's terrific also. But there is a stillness about him and I think he plays the regalness of the character very, very well. The other thing is, which I have to tell Frank tomorrow, he is more than willing to change his hair color. He'll change his hair color...you know, change his eyebrows. He is a complete actor. And, yeah, and he cares so much, so he'll do whatever has to be done in order to be Robert. And believe me he will be Robert.

IRV DRASNIN
Fenton's been casting pictures 23 years. His long list of credits include Academy Award winners, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest and Godfather II. And boxoffice winners: Back to the Future and Raiders of the Lost Ark.

Irv Drasnin: **What's an average day for Mike Fenton?**

Mike Fenton: **Oh, an average day is perhaps seeing a couple of actors in the morning who've been sent in. Um, fending the telephone calls. The telephone calls are unbelievable. Basically, speaking to agents, and then talking to our producers and directors, preparing lists, preparing interviews so that we can bring actors in to meet the director, and uh reading scripts.**

FENTON, With Staff
Uh, John Stanley, check availability, agent interest. That's that page. Now on this page where I put possibles, re-check their availability. In other words, check the availability of Kevin, check the availability of Voight...

STAFF PERSON
Got it.

MIKE FENTON
Check the availability of Walken. Now, Coyote we know is available. I'm into that already. Fred Ward, you'd better check the availability. They say his movie is sensational. And Michael Beck. Check the availability. That's for that page. Okay?

STAFF PERSON
Okay.

FENTON
This page. It's almost the same page. Here's where the new ones are. Okay. Pat Carroll, Kate Reed, Eileen Brennan. And that should do it. Okay?

TROY, Fenton's Assistant (On Phone)
Spielberg's on one.

MIKE FENTON
Steven. How are ya? I'm terrific. Harry's a wonderful project. It's going to be great. Now. I have good news from my point of view, but bad news from your point of view. Well, only Lithgow, really he's going to write you a note, but I think the bottom line is he's not going to do it, but I have a very bizzare suggestion. Now are you sitting down? Bill Cosby. Why?

TROY (On Phone)
But, what we heard from Kubrick was that they want to test McIver for Door Gunner...

FENTON (On Phone)
Thanks Steven. Bye.

Goldsmith, I've word for you on Helen Slater. She yours? She's Tony's. Okay. Uh, Spielberg just got off the plane with me, and she's being eliminated from Always, for no reason other than her age, and he said he wants the following transmitted to Helen and it's very important. He thinks she is nifty. Okay? Now, off the record, we have another project that I have suggested to Steven that we consider her for. It is down the road a piece, but she is the first name on the list. I cannot tell ya. Because it's several years off, I mean you know the way we work so, but she's the first name on the list. Okay? Oh, absolutely.

Irv Drasnin: **Mike, are people beating a path to your door? Are people still coming to Hollywood trying to make it in the movies?**

Mike Fenton: **Absolutely, People come to Hollywood, it's like, it's the end of the bus line or the end of the train line and people come here on a daily basis thinking that they are different, that they are going to make it in the big time.**

ACTING TEACHER #1
Okay, I've shown you that I can do it the way I should do it. And now I'll do it the way I want to do it. God, I'd like to get to the way you want to do it the first time. Yes. Yeah, right. And you walk out the...I love that experience. You walk out the door, you go down the steps you know and you're in the street and you go, boy I can do it! Now I know how I should have done that audition. Now I know. And of course then, it's too late.

DRASNIN
It's the oldest story in Hollywood and the biggest dream. The myth is that you can be discovered in a drugstore or parking cars. The reality is another Hollywood legend. The struggling actor, in an acting class.

Acting Student #1: **Remember how I said I wasn't sure that I'd made eye contact with that casting lady? But I guess I had? I, I don't feel like we made any connections.**

Acting Teacher: **Why not?**

Acting Student #2: **We didn't have clear objectives, or clear goals.**

Acting Student #1: **Well, I, I thought we, I thought we did but I mean in here I, I...**

Acting Teacher: **There is no world outside of that bedroom. Believe it. This is for real, that you're not going to sit down at the end of this scene and go on with your lives, that this is it.**

DRASNIN
Scenes like this are being played all over Hollywood, ever night. And on any night, an actor might learn that even the smallest discovery can make a difference.

ACTING SCENE I

Student: **We've got to talk about this.**

Teacher: **More.**

Student: **A technical thing: her eyes are perpendicular to mine and it's like...**

Teacher: **Well, what would you do in that situation? Good.**

STUDENT #3
All of us here want to learn and what I'm learning is a part of acting that I never knew. When I lived back home in Sacramento, I always thought you know, Hollywood, starlets and actors and stuff, that it was like so easy. But, when you get into this class, there's so much more behind it, you know, being able to express yourself with feelings and emotions and openly with people watching.

ACTING SCENE II

Student #4: **Why don't you just sit in your room all day long and feel sorry for yourself?**

Student #5: Well that's easy for you to say. You got a free ride. All expenses paid. You're going up to Barrington tomorrow. Now I should have had a free ride, but Nicky blew it. Oh shit.

Acting Scene III

Student #4: What am I going to do with you Daryl? My gosh, we'll just have to put you out back and shoot you! You know I didn't mean anything by that.

TEACHER
Oooh, keep committing. Don't play at it...passion. C'mon.

ACTING SCENE IV

Student #5: I had a friend in Nam. He was a crazy mother. He was an outcast.

TEACHER
He was a crazy what?

Irv Drasnin: Does your family understand what you're doing here?

Student #4: I don't think they did at the beginning. It was not something that I had brought up. I just knew inside that I was going to be an actress. And in little Avon Lake, Ohio there's not a whole lot of pushing for that and a lot of "pie in the sky," that's what they'd say. I think that's what my father said at first. And then I just did it.

TEACHER #2
They go to classes, they have other jobs that they do. Most of them are waiters of secretaries, or part-time things where they can get off and, and go to interviews. Uh, they go to classes in the mornings, they take dance classes, they take either aerobics or movement class. Some of them do speech classes. Some of them do private coaching. Uh...everything seems to be geared around being ready to do the audition and or the job.

SET OF KILLBOTS

DIRECTOR
Roll camera. Action, Lenny. Briskly. **(Gunfire)** Cut.

IRV DRASNIN
The job could be here, the set of a low-budget action feature--a traditional starting place for anyone trying to break into the movies. Twenty years ago, they might have started on a a Roger Corman film, as did Francis Coppola, Martin Scorcese, and Jack Nicholson, in movies like Bloody Mama or Little Shop of Horrors. Today, it might be Killbots for Corman's wife, Julie.

JULIE CORMAN, Producer
And we'll deal with the BNCR. What is it? Okay can we get...

DIRECTOR
We have no...we have very little dialogue tonight...

IRV DRASNIN
Most won't even get this far, shooting all night in a San Fernando Valley shopping mall, being schooled in how to break a store window. For some anyway, it's the price of admission. The willingness to take any part, however small, to do anything to get into the movies.

Irv Drasnin: How has this business changed since you started out in it? Is it any different today than it was twenty-five years ago?

Mike Fenton: Absolutely. The major change is that the studio system does not exist in the way that it used to, and we have no way to build stars. In the old days, if I wanted to be an actor and if I were lucky enough to be attractive enough to be exciting enough to have the type of personality the studio was looking for, the studio might put me under contract at a hundred dollars a week or two hundred dollars a week. But at the same time, they would send me to school. They'd have me learn how to sword fight. They'd have me learn how to speak and how to walk and how to act. And they would groom me. And they would dress me. And they would teach me everything I would have to know to be an image that the public would like to see on the screen. And then I would do several films.

Irv Drasnin: And today?

Mike Fenton: And today, the agents will find somebody, not groom them, hope that they can act, send them to us and if they have a certain charisma, a certain personality that we like, we'll introduce them to a director, and if the director likes them and if their background is such that warrants it, we'll read them, and if they read very well, and if they're right for the part, we might test them.

(To L'Wren Scott) Can I see your book?

L'Wren Scott: I would love for you to.

IRV DRASNIN
For L'Wren Scott, 20 years old and newly arrived from Utah, it's a meeting every young actor would like to have. Fenton might be casting as many as eight or nine movies at once, dozens of parts, for directors like Coppola, Lucas, and Spielberg. L'Wren Scott needs Fenton and hopes that one day, Fenton might need her.

Mike Fenton: You really hope to pursue a career in acting rather than modeling, right? Or both?

L'Wren Scott Well, both. I think that I wouldn't like to be branded as just a model. You know how that sometimes comes about?

Mike Fenton: This bunch. This really is cute. I love the one, I love this one...

L'Wren Scott: This one's titled <u>The Hangover</u>.

Mike Fenton: The Hangover. That's beautiful. I just love that. The girl's got soul!

L'Wren Scott: You have to show your every mood.

Mike Fenton: Now did he say something about you've already landed a prt in something?

L'Wren Scott: Yes! I'm so excited I can't believe it. Um, Thursday, last Thursday, I went in for a cold reading, and I went in to read for the new Stallone film. And I found out about that at the last minute, just like this interview here, and I walked in there and I, you know, read and Sylvester laughed and he reacted, you know, so I thought, oh

L'Wren Scott (Continued): at least I'm getting a response. Because the other two cold readings I'd been on, people, the casting casting directors, you know, they didn't say a thing and you just, you know, I was so nervous. But I wasn't nervous or anything. Because I didn't really even know Sylvester Stallone was going to be in there, which was really great. But, I got cast for the part. And having never have done a film before in my life you know, I have no idea what's going to happen or go on, I just know I got the part and they'll let me know when I have to be to work. And I'll be there.

Mike Fenton: That is terrific.

Irv Drasnin: What are her chances of making it?

Mike Fenton: Well as a model, probably very good. As an actress, that remains to be seen. We'll look at the film after she has done Sylvester's film, and see where that leads her.

Irv Drasnin: What were the odds of her just walking into that meeting with Sylvester Stallone, reading, and getting even a small part?

Mike Fenton: The odds are incredible. I mean, that happens so rarely in this business that somebody without any credits, who has just begun to study, can walk into an office and read for a part and score it. It's, I don't know. When one stops to think that there are over 50,000 Screen Actor Guild members in Southern California, and here's a girl who is not a member of the Guild, who walks in and scores a part the first time out, it's amazing.

MUSIC: "HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD"

FANTASY TOUR GUIDE
Here we are. One more time, back on the Boulevard, where we have our fabulous Walk of Fame, yes indeed, with all the Stars in the sidewalk. About twice a month they have a dedication ceremony, and the star has to come down here, yes indeed, and of course they have their star put in the cement. And we have our honorary Mayor--and a lot of celebrities come.

STAR INSTALLATION CEREMONY

MAYOR OF HOLLYWOOD
Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce and the Hollywood Historic Trust, I'm very pleased to welcome all of you to another Walk of Fame dedication. (Applause.) Well, today we dedicte Star Number 1,812. (Applause.)

IRV DRASNIN
No one knows for sure what makes an actor a star. But you know it when you see one. Millions come to Hollywood hoping to see a movie star. Others come hoping to become one.

ACTING CLASS

Student: **Remember when I was in Nam? I was in charge of a company. And I lost them.**

IRV DRASNIN
They're still coming, no matter what the odds. About one-in-five thousand members of the Screen Actors Guild earns as much as ten thousand dollars a year, acting.

ACTING CLASS

Student: **They didn't die. They killed themselves for each other. I mean that, exactly.**

Irv Drasnin: **Why do they do it?**

Teacher #1: **I think because they can't not. You know.**

Teacher #2: **It's a dream. I think it's really a dream that people have for every reason. For all the good reasons, all the bad reasons. You know?**

Student: **I mean I felt wrong to be alive. To look at the new refrigerator. To open the new bank book. To drive the new car. I mean, you could take those things out of a war, but when you were driving that new car you have got to know that it came out of the love a man can have for another man. And you have got to be better because of that. Otherwise, what you have is loot and there's blood on it. I didn't want any of it. And I guess it included you.**

TEACHER
Do it again.

IRV DRASNIN
This monologue is from Arthur Miller's A View From The Bridge. The actor has done it three times tonight. By the fourth time, something begins to happen.

Student: **You uh, remember when I was in Nam? I was in charge of a company? Well, I lost them. Just about all of them. And it takes a little time to toss that off, 'cause they weren't just men. They didn't die, they killed themselves for each other. I mean that, exactly. A little more selfish, and they'd be here today. And I got this idea watching them go down. See everything around me was being destroyed, but it seemed like one new thing was being made. A kind of responsibility, man-to-man. I mean, God, you can take those things out of a war but when you were driving that car you've got to know that it came out of the love a man can feel for another man. Otherwise what you have is loot and there's blood on it. And I don't want any of it. I guess that included you.**

TEACHER
I like that.
(Applause.)

Irv Drasnin: **How many people in this class tonight can expect to have careers in Hollywood?**

Teacher #1: **If you are talking starring careers, maybe one. Maybe.**

Irv Drasnin: **Are you going to make it?**

Student #2: **Got to. Really. You know, you have to...this a... I'm going to make it.**

Irv Drasnin: **Are you going to make it?**

Student #3: **You bet. You better believe it!**

MIKE FENTON
I think people with perserverence can make it in this business. I think luck and timing has a great deal to do with it. And it doesn't really matter what capacity you're in. If you were lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time, and then you have the necessary skills you can probably go a long way. It's that old adage, you could walk onto a studio lot and turn right and bump into a director and that director might say, 'Joe, are you an actor?' And Joe says, 'Yes!' And he says, 'wonderful, you're just what I'm looking for!" Or you could have turned left and been run down by the prop truck.

MUSIC: "HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD"

IRV DRASNIN
Maybe one reason it's hard to separate fantasy from reality in Hollywood is that we don't want to. In producing fantasy, Hollywood fills a need. But one thing Hollywood needs is a public to cherish the dream and preserve it. Fans like these, star polishers, on Hollywood Boulevard.

Star Polisher: **Well, we heard about this four-and-a-half years ago. They had stars up for adoption and we came out and signed up for Barry Manilow's and we were lucky to get it. To us, it's one way of saying, thank you Barry, for everything you've done for us. Because he really has. He's brought us through...I think he's brought a lot his fans through a lot of problems.**

Irv Drasnin: **Can you tell who's popular and who isn't by which stars are polished and which aren't?**

Star Polisher #2: **When you walk down you can see who has fans. They're shining, and the other ones like, behind you is Ronald Reagan.**

Irv Drasnin: **Polished?**

Star Polisher #2: **Not any more. It was. Now it's a mess.**

Star Polisher #3: **That takes a little more elbow grease. Right in here. Yes I see that. See, mother is a very good director, too.**

Star Polisher #4: **The old pictures were just well, really, they're wonderful. They're much better than a lot of the new ones. I like the older ones, where people did some acting and there was some good action. Used to get on a horse, you know, and that was nice. I guess I'm just old.**

Irv Drasnin: **What do you think these people, these tourists, think of Hollywood when they come here to Hollywood Boulevard?**

Star Polisher #3: **They're fascinated. Absolutely fascinated.**

Star Polisher# 4: **And they come along and say, oh there's Bette Davis, oh there's Robert Mitchum, oh there's Nat Cole. I mean they just go through the whole bit. You'd think they were the real people themselves.**

Star Polisher #4 (Continued): **They love it! When you and I are dead and gone, Hollywood's going to be here, in the next generation. As long as the world stands there's going to be Hollywood.**

JEREMY ZIMMER
Hi, it's Jeremy. I need him desperately. I need him desperately. Jim, he's holding on the other line. I've tried to reach him three times. He's finally called me today. Just now.

IRV DRASNIN
As long as there's a Hollywood, there will be days like this for people like Jeremy Zimmer. For him, this is just another day at the office, in the movie business.

JEREMY ZIMMER (On Phone)
...he's saying that that's not the deal he made. It's not the deal he was told about. It's not the deal I told him about, it's not the deal you told him about and it's ridiculous, and he wants us screaming, shouting and suing. He would like to speak to you. Jim, you can't do this to me.

JEREMY ZIMMER (On Phone)
Hi. He is out at a drink meeting. We're trying to reach him. Where are you, in your hotel room?

JEREMY ZIMMER
It all started with a certain company wanting a certain director to do a movie starring a certain star. He signed on to do the movie and we made a deal. That star, then, for reasons that we won't discuss, was no longer involved in the picture. Uh, they asked him, the director, about some other ideas for casting. He discussed it with them and then they went out and pursued, they the production company, went out and hired who they wanted in the cast. Told the director this was who was going to be in it, he said, fine, I'll direct it, but I want a new deal. More money.

JEREMY ZIMMER (On Phone)
Hi. He is crazed. He says that he was never told this. That you never told him this, that he agreed to the deal you told him but, he never was told this part of it and that he expects CMA...

ICM EXECUTIVE (On Phone)
Right. Well I'm here, Jeremy's here, we'll get hold of Jim and we'll get strong. Right. Now where are you?

IRV DRASNIN
While an ICM executive talks to the client, a director, Zimmer is talking to his boss. The problem here isn';t the cast or script or the set: artistic differences. The problem is the deal. The director got more money. The issue is how he'll be paid two-hundred-seventy-five-thousand dollars. The production company says a hundred thousand now, and the rest later. The director wants it all now, and he's refusing to do the film.

Irv Drasnin: **Is this unusual, in your business?**

Jeremy Zimmer: **This is a bad one. This ranks up there with the bad ones.**

Irv Drasnin: **What makes this a bad one?**

Jeremy Zimmer: **They're starting shooting tomorrow.**

JEREMY ZIMMER (On Phone)
Wait. Wait. Frank's only response is that Jerry didn't call him back with a response. Well you know what? Failure to call back is not, ah, an agreement. And you know that in my business. If I don't call you back it's not 'cause I'm conceding. It doesn't matter whether you have consultation rights. They consulted him. He said I'll get right back to you and then they didn't hear from him in what they considered to be the right amount of time so they went and made a deal with the guy. All I'm saying is, you know what? There's been a lot of pissing on both sides. And you know what? All of us would work a lot more constructively together if we would realize that there's no black and white, there's shades of gray, and that you guys have been wrong in some things and Jerry's been wrong in other things. I'm a big enough person to admit it but you guys don't seem to be able to admit that you've been wrong in your areas, too. And I don't hear you, I don't hear you admitting it right now. If you're trying to break the deal with this latest set of demands, tell me and I'll stop wasting my time.

Irv Drasnin: **Is this what you do every day?**

Jeremy Zimmer **Yeah. I don't know how I do, but I do it every day. And it's a battle. There's a lot of battles. There's a lot of battles. Making movies is very hard. For us, sitting here in our office, making movies.**

Jeremy Zimmer (Continued): **It sure doesn't look like we are but we are. And it's hard out there. It's hard doing it. There's egos, and battles of will between the studios and the stars and the directors and the writers and the producers, and it's nuts.**

JEREMY ZIMMER (On Phone)
Fourth and one. Goal line defense. Thrown back. We gotta tell Jerry. They will not do it. He's saying, he said it to you, you didn't understand it...I believe you, Jim, I told him he never said it to you. He's saying I now what I said, I was perfectly clear. Yeah.

Irv Drasnin: **Are you doing this at breakfast, at lunch, at dinner?**

Jeremy Zimmer: **You're doing it. Yeah. On the phone, at breakfast, at lunch, at dinner. At home on weekends. On the golf course. I play golf, which is sort of a thing of the past. Out on the survival field, I play this game called Survival which is a thing of the future. You do it everywhere.**

JEREMY ZIMMER (On Phone)
Yes. Jerry, we're holding on the other line for you. "Hang up, Laura." Okay. Here is where it's at. And I'll just run it through and you can react as you will. When Jim, when Jimmy renegotiated the deal on Saturday, he was in his car. They were in a resteraunt. There was some misunderstanding at that point.

IRV DRASNIN
It's probably fair to say that Hollywood leaves a lot of room for misunderstanding. Agents make deals that can fall apart at the ring of a car phone. Studios invest millions on the look in a director's eye. A director often doesn't know where his next film is coming from, an actor, his next meal. For them, even in a world of fantasy there's no escaping reality. In Hollywood, as elsewhere, there's no one formula for success,or for survival.

Irv Drasnin: **What is survival in Hollywood?**

Jeremy Zimmer: **Well, there's a lot of different ways to do it. For some people, it's not going too fast--not flying too high, too fast. Because the people who do that basically, there's a lot of people gunning for them and they get shot down.**

Jeremy Zimmer (Continued): **It's when you do get there, not rubbing people's nose in it. It's paying back favors that have been paid to you. It's knowing the inevitable which is you're going to be out. As soon as you're in, you've got to realize you're going to be out. With an agent, you've got to know your clients are going to leave you, 'cause they do. And with a studio job, you've got to know you're going to get fired, because you will. And as soon as you accept those two basic tenets, you realize the client you're representing, although you want to do the best for him, and part of the youth, part of what I do in my youth that I hope doesn't get toned down, probably will, is forgetting that all the deals I'm making today and all the studio executives I'm killing to make'em, you know the clients will probably leave me but the studio executive's going to be studio executive somewhere else. So survival is not, is trying not to kill too many people, too quickly.**

ZIMMER, (On Phone)
We took a very strong position and they said too bad. Jerry, I have been, I have done nothing but scream at these guys for two solid days. So I'm plenty furious but I, the difference is I don't, I'm not screaming at you, I'm screaming at them. No, no, no. In other words, are you, in other words they want to know are you on or off the movie?

MUSIC: "HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD"

FANTASY TOUR GUIDE
Just think if you had driven all through Hollywood on your own, you wouldn't have known any of this! Right?

JUDY WOODRUFF
To the perennial question of which counts most in Hollywood, art or commerce, the answer must be--both.

We analyze the movies, argue about them...disucss them as issues of mass culture, or entertainment. We spend millions to make movies.

But, in the end, what many of us do about the movies--over and over again --is go see them.

Next week on FRONTLINE...a report on an overlooked group of Vietnam soldiers.

The program is called "The Bloods of 'Nam." It is next week on FRONTLINE.

I'm Judy Woodruff.

Goodnight.

Written by
IRV DRASNIN

Co-Producer
TOM CASCIATO

Camera
DON SELLERS

Film Editor
LINDA SPAIN

Sound
ALAN BARKER

Assistant Camera
JEFFREY KIMBALL

Assistant Film Editor
JUDITH STARR WOLFF

Production Assistant
STACY STARR

Research
TOM CASCIATO

Sound Mix
DOMINICK TAVELLA

For FRONTLINE:

Anchor
JUDY WOODRUFF

Producer/Director
JANET MCFADDEN

Post Production Supervisor
JUDY BANKS

Production Assistant
MERLE R. EISMAN

Lighting Director
CHAS NORTON

Camera
GREG MACDONALD
DASAL BANKS

Stage Manager
RANDY GRAY

Switcher
KEN CORCORAN

Technical Production
JOHN SULLIVAN

Audio
DAN JONES

Video
STEVE DOUGLASS

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Videotape Editors
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MARY-KATE SHEA

Scenic Design
CLINT HEITMAN

FRONTLINE Theme by
MASON DARING
MARTIN BRODY

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MARY DEVEAUX
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Executive Producer
DAVID FANNING

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